

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 ACDA-12 CIAE-00 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6124

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY

PARIS FOR SCI/SALMON

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG TECH

SUBJECT: SOCIALIST PARTY (POSL) VOTES MORATORIUM ON NUCLEAR
POWER PROJECT

REF: LUXEMBOURG 1016

SUMMARY: A DECEMBER 10 SPECIAL SOCIALIST PARTY CONFERENCE
ON THE PROPOSED NUCLEAR POWER PLANT AT REMERSCHEN (REFTTEL)
VOTED NARROWLY FOR A MORATORIUM ON THE PROJECT. THE
LIBERAL/SOCIALIST COALITION GOVT. IS CASTING ABOUT FOR
SOME MEANS OF KEEPING THE PROJECT ALIVE IN SPITE OF THE
POSL PARTY POSITION, BUT ITS PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS SEEM
SLIM BETWEEN NOW AND THE 1979 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS.END
SUMMARY.

1. IN PREPARATION FOR A LONG-DELAYED PARLIAMENTARY

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VOTE, LUXEMBOURG POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE BEEN DEFINING
FORMAL PARTY POSITIONS ON THE PROPOSED NUCLEAR POWER
PLANT AT REMERSCHEN IN THE MOSELLE VALLEY. THE DEMO-
CRATIC (LIBERAL) PARTY OF PM. THORN, WHICH SUPPORTED THE
PLANT IN ITS EARLIER COALITION WITH THE CHRISTIAN-SOCIAL
PARTY AND WHICH HAS SPEARHEADED THE PROJECT DURING ITS
PRESENT PARTNERSHIP WITH THE SOCIALIST, RECENTLY VOTED

A CLEAR "YES" TO REMERSCHEN. A SPECIAL SOCIALIST PARTY CONFERENCE ON DEC. 10, HOWEVER, ADMINISTERED A SETBACK TO PROPONENTS OF THE NUCLEAR PLANT WITH A VOTE FOR A "SEVERAL" YEAR MORATORIUM. IN AN ALL-DAY, LIVELY DEBATE THE SOCIALIST PARTY LEADERSHIP - NOTABLY FINANCE MINISTER POOS AND VICE-PRESIDENT BERG - DEFENDED THE PROJECT BUT THE ANTI-NUCLEAR OPPOSITION NARROWLY CARRIED THE DAY.

2. FOUR OPTIONS WERE PRESENTED TO THE SOCIALIST CONFEREES:
(1) AN UNCONDITIONAL YES FOR THE PROJECT WITHOUT ANY DELAY;
(2) AN ABSOLUTE NO; (3) A SEVERAL-YEAR MORATORIUM; AND
(4) A POSTPONEMENT OF THE DECISION UNTIL CERTAIN CONDITIONS WERE MET (SPELLED OUT BELOW). NEITHER THOSE IN FAVOR NOR THOSE AGAINST SAW MUCH LIKELIHOOD OF A MAJORITY FOR A SIMPLE "YES" OR "NO", AND THE DEBATE FOCUSED ON THE TWO COMPROMISE PROPOSALS, WITH THE PARTY LEADERSHIP SUPPORTING POSTPONEMENT AND THE ANTI-NUCLEAR FORCES URGING A MORATORIUM.

3. THE CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO PROPOSITION (4) ABOVE INCLUDED: A) A WEST GERMAN GOVERNMENT GUARANTEE THAT IT WILL ACCEPT THE DISPOSAL OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE FROM REMERSCHEN IN THE FRG;
B) A FRENCH GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKING THAT THE FRENCH NUCLEAR PLANT TO BE CONSTRUCTED AT CATTENOM (6 MILES UPSTREAM FROM REMERSCHEN) NOT ALTER THE TEMPERATURE OR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE FLOW OF THE MOSELLE RIVER;
C) THE ASSUMPTION BY RWE (THE WEST GERMAN UTILITY GROUP WHICH IS THE GOL'S PARTNER IN THE PROJECT) OF THE RESPONSIBILITY AND COSTS OF DISMANTLING THE PLANT WHEN IT CEASES OPERATING;
D) A CLARIFICATION OF THE GUARANTY OF GOL LAONS TO SENU (RWE-GOL PARTNERSHIP COMPANY) DURING THE CONSTRUCTION PHASE;
E) THE DEFINITION BY MULTILATERAL TREATIES OR OTHER "EUROPEAN" AGREEMENTS OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FRG, GOF, AND GOL IN CASE OF ACCIDENTS.

4. HAD THE SOCIALISTS OPTED FOR PROPOSITION NO. 4, THE GOL IS CONFIDENT IT COULD HAVE HAD FORMAL AGREEMENTS WITH FRANCE AND GERMANY ON ALL OF THE CONDITIONS WITHIN A MATTER OF MONTHS BECAUSE BOTH THE GOF AND FRG HAD ALREADY AGREED TO THEM IN PRINCIPLE. THE PROPOSAL WAS IN REALITY A TACTIC DESIGNED TO WIN THE VOTES OF THOSE WHO HAD LINGERING DOUBTS ABOUT THE PROJECT BUT WHO WERE NOT UNALTERABLY OPPOSED -- THE TACTIC BACKFIRED BECAUSE A MAJORITY APPARENTLY RECOGNIZED THAT IT MEANT DEFACTO APPROVAL OF THE PROJECT.

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5. SOCIALIST MINISTER OF FINANCE POOS WAS THE PRINCIPAL DEFENDER OF THE PROJECT AND POINTED OUT ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE GOL'S LONG-TERM ENERGY POLICY. HE NOTED THE CONCLUSION OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL THAT ONLY PRODUCTION OF ELECTRICITY IN LUXEMBOURG ITSELF WOULD GUARANTEE SECURITY OF SUPPLY AS WELL AS ECONOMIC AND TAX REVENUE BENEFITS. JOBS CREATED WOULD ADMITTEDLY BE LIMITED BUT NONETHELESS A PLUS. POOS WAS SKEPTICAL THAT A NON-NUCLEAR POWER PLANT WOULD BE MORE PROFITABLE AND STRESSED ITS POTENTIALLY HIGHER POLLUTION. HE ADDED THAT FAVORABLE PRICES FOR ELECTRICITY FROM THE NUCLEAR PLANT COULD NOT BE MATCHED SHOULD LUXEMBOURG BE REQUIRED TO BUY ITS POWER ABROAD.

6. THE OPPOSITION, LED BY THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR A MORATORIUM (CNAM), HAD DONE ITS SPADE WORK AND MANAGED TO CREATE CONSIDERABLE DOUBT ABOUT THE MERITS OF THE
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PROJECT. THE CNAM COALITION COMBINED THE PREDICTABLE ANTI-NUCLEAR ARGUMENTS - ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS, TECHNICAL DANGERS, UNPREDICTABLE COSTS AND INVESTMENT RETURN - WITH SPECIAL PARTY CONCERN THAT THE GOVERNMENT USE THE FINANCIAL MEANS AT ITS DISPOSAL TO SUPPORT JOB INTENSIVE PROJECTS. THE PRESENT EXCESS ELECTRIC POWER CAPACITY IN EUROPE WAS ALSO CITED AS AN ARGUMENT AGAINST THE URGNECY OF A NUCLEAR POWER PLANT. ON THE FIRST BALLOT, ONLY 56 VOTES WERE RECORDED FOR A "NO" AND 30 FOR A "YES", WHEREAS THERE WERE 111 VOTES EACH FOT THE TWO COMPROMISE PROPOSALS. THE FINAL VOTE WAS 156 FOR THE MORATORIUM VERSUS 153 FOR POSTPONEMENT.

7. DESPITE THE CLOSENESS OF THE VOTE,THE SOCIALIST PARTY RULING MEANS THAT A DECISION CANNOT NOW BE TAKEN ON THE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT. STRICTLY SPEAKING, THE MORATORIUM POSTPONES THE DECISION UNTIL AFTER THE NEXT NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN 1979. GOL OFFICIALS HAVE INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT ABANDON THE PROJECT. MINISTER OF ENERGY JOSY BARTHEL (LIBERAL PARTY) STATED DURING A RECENT DISCUSSION OF U.S. NUCLEAR POLICY (SEE LUXEMBOURG 1058) THAT HE DEEPLY REGRETTE THE OUTCOME. BARTHEL SAID THE LIBERAL PARTY EXECUTIVE BOARD WOULD MEET SEPARATELY TO ASSESS THE SITUATION AND THEN MEET WITH THEIR SOCIALIST COALITION PARTNERS TO WORK OUT A COORDINATED GOL POLICY.

8. COMMENT: GOING TO THE GRASS ROOTS FOR APPROVAL OF A HIGHLY COMPLEX PROJECT NOW APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A TACTICAL ERROR BY THE SOCIALIST PARTY LEADERSHIP. BUT DESPITE THE SETBACK, BOTH SOCIALIST AND LIBERAL LEADERS ARE CONVINCED THAT NUCLEAR POWER IS THE ANSWER TO LUXEMBOURG'S NEEDS. THEY SEE THE OPPONENTS AS OSTRICH-LIKE, ATTEMPTING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO WICH AWAY THE NUCLEAR AGE WHEN IN FACT NUCLEAR POWER WILL BE JUST ACROSS THE FRENCH BORDER IN CATTENON AND - RUMOR HAS IT - ACROSS THE MOSELLE FROM REMERSCHEN AT NENNIG, GERMANY, SHOULD LUXEMBOURG DECIDE NEGATIVELY. THE SOCIALIST MINISTERS CAN, HOWEVER, HARDLY IGNORE THEIR PARTY'S RESOLUTIONS, ESPECIALLY ONLY EIGHTEEN MONTHS BEFORE ELECTIONS, AND THE GRAND DUCHY'S ONE NUCLEAR PROJECT NOW APPEARS DESTINED FOR LIMBO UTNIL 1979 OR 1980. LOWENSTEIN

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